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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

OFFICE OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES

23 October 1962

MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR

SUBJECT: Survivability of West Berlin*

ASSUMPTION: SOVIET BLOCKADE OF WEST BERLIN IN
RETALIATION FOR US ACTIONS IN CUBA

1. West Berlin is economically prepared for a total blockade.

We estimate that existing stocks of critical items are sufficient to maintain the physical well-being of the West Berlin population for at least six months. With respect to particular categories of critical supplies, we estimate:

FOOD: At least six months (with selective rationing)

FUEL: About 1 year
(Coal)

MEDICINES: Six months

INDUSTRIAL MATERIAL: Sufficient to maintain employment for 4-5 months.

* This memorandum has been coordinated with the representative of the Director of Intelligence and Research, Department of State, and the Director, Defense Intelligence Agency.

Approved for Release
Date April 1978

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GROUP 1

Excluded from automatic
downgrading and
declassification

2. The critical factor, however, is not physical or economic but psychological. Everything would depend on the context of the Soviet move, and how quickly and forcefully the US reacted. A total and uncontested blockade would cause the West Berliners to lose all hope in a matter of weeks. A blockade contested by a successful airlift would probably relieve initial apprehension and sustain morale for a few months. Over a longer period, however, morale would deteriorate rapidly in the absence of a reasonable expectation that the US would break the blockade. The West Berliner's would become extraordinarily sensitive to, and suspicious of any indication from either side that the Cuban crisis might produce an accommodation at their expense.

Abbot Smith

ABBOT SMITH
Acting Chairman